



DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
INFORMATION SERVICE

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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FWS PREPARES FOR MOURNING DOVE CALL COUNT

The 1956 "call count" for mourning doves will be made between May 20 and June 10 in 44 States, the Fish and Wildlife Service said today. The data so obtained will be used in fixing the hunting seasons and the bag limits.

The count will be made on more than 790 routes by approximately 600 individuals. It takes two hours to cover a route. Many of the workers will be furnished by the State game departments; some will be volunteers and the remainder will be Fish and Wildlife Service personnel. The counts will be made early in the morning beginning promptly at half an hour before sunrise in each locality. This will be the seventh year the Service has used the call count data in the preparation of dove hunting regulations.

The 1956 program will follow the 726 routes used last year to permit satisfactory comparison of dove populations. These routes are located in all the States except Maine, Vermont, New Hampshire, and Rhode Island. In many States the mourning dove is legally declared to be a song bird and not subject to hunting. Even in these States the counts are made because doves from those States migrate into areas where hunting is permitted. Each route is 20 miles long, and has 20 listening stations. These stations are one mile apart and follow secondary roads.

The persons making the count must be at his first listening station ready to begin work at exactly half an hour before sunrise, providing the weather conditions meet the specified standards. If the weather is adverse the count is delayed until a succeeding day. At the end of three minutes the counter gets into his car and drives to the next listening station one mile away, taking three minutes to make the distance. En route he makes note of any doves he sees. Following this schedule the counter will cover the 20 listening stations, plus one more mile after the last one to make the full 20 miles, in just two hours. Only one coverage is made of each route each year.

The results are listed State by State and compared with similar data of previous years. This information then becomes part of the material used by the Fish and Wildlife Service in the preparation of hunting regulations for the next season. The results are also used by the respective States in their dove management plans.

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As an added effort to perfect this technique, the Fish and Wildlife Service has arranged for the Iowa Statistical Laboratory at Ames to make a thorough analysis of dove population data in relation to land utilization along all the routes. The results of this study will probably be available for deciding whether any changes will be necessary in the 1957 dove count method.

Dove hunting is a major sport in the southeastern States. It is also a major sport in Texas and southern California. Nineteen States and the District of Columbia did not allow mourning dove shooting in 1955. These States are in the northern part of the country from Montana, and Wyoming eastward, including North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Iowa, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Michigan, Indiana, Ohio, New Jersey, New York, Connecticut, Rhode Island, Massachusetts, Vermont, New Hampshire, and Maine.

During the 1955 season the daily bag limit was eight doves in the eastern part of the country and 10 doves in the Rocky Mountain and Pacific Coast States and in Texas, Oklahoma and Missouri. The season was 35 full days or 45 half days in the eastern area and 45 full days in the West. Each State selected its own dates within the period, September 1, 1954, to January 10, 1955, as set by the Secretary of the Interior.

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